DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 343 EC 200 280

TITLE Final Evaluation of 1985-86 Program Alternatives to Special Education. O.E.A. Evaluation Section Report.

INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn. Office of Educational Assessment.

PUB DATE Nov 86

NOTE 35p.; Prepared by the O.E.A. Student Progress Evaluation Unit.

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Learning Problems; *Nontraditional Education; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Referral; *Remedial Instruction; *Special Education; Student Placement

IDENTIFIERS New York City Board of Education; *Program Alternatives to Special Education

ABSTRACT

The report presents data on the effectiveness of Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE), an effort to reduce the number of students referred to special education in New York City schools. Four major evaluation issues are addressed: number of students participating in PASE during the 1985-1986 school year; reasons for student selections in PASE; impact of the program on target students; and effect on annual rate of initial school referrals to special education. Findings revealed that 16,031 students participated in the program during the year, with a majority attending elementary schools. The major reasons for participation were reading deficiencies, general learning problems, behavior problems, and problems with mathematics. Half of the PASE students received multiple services, of which the most frequent combination was reading instruction and guidance. There was a close correspondence between selection criteria and the services students received. A random impact survey of 25% of the students indicated that staff noted an improvement in both social and academic behaviors for more than one-third of the students. However, another third showed no improvement and approximately 20% lost ground. Overall, initial school referrals to special education dropped 15.6% for schools with PASE programs. (Author/CL)

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FINAL EVALUATION OF
1985-86 PROGRAM
ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

OEA Evaluation Report

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O.E.A. EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

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November, 1986

FINAL EVALUATION OF 1985-86 PROGRAM ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

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SUMMARY

Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) was implemented for a second year in 1985-86 to provide support services to students at risk of referral to special education. The Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) funded the 32 New York City community school districts (C.S.D.s) to individually develop PASE programs. The overall goal of this program was to reduce the number of students referred to special education.

EVALUATION ISSUES

This final 1985-86 report focuses on four issues:

- How many students participated in PASE during the 1985-86 school year?
- Why were students selected for participation in PASE?
- What impact did the program have on target students?
- Did the annual rate of initial school referrals to School Based Support Teams or Committees On The Handicapped (S.B.S.T./C.O.H.) decrease in PASE Schools?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A total of 16,031 students participated in PASE during the 1985-86 school year. A majority of PASE students (77.4 percent) were attending elementary schools. There were four main reasons that students were selected to participate in PASE: reading deficiencies (63.8 percent), general learning problems (41.5 percent), behavior problems (31.4 percent), and problems with mathematics (28.3 percent). Half of the PASE students received multiple services. The most frequent pairing of services was reading instruction and guidance, (nearly 34.6 percent). Additionally, there was a close correspondence between selection criteria and the services students received.

A random sample of twenty-five percent of the students appearing on the fall roster was chosen for the PASE student impact survey. This survey assessed changes in students' social and academic behaviors during the course of the 1985-86 program. The vast majority of the respondents to this survey were teachers who knew the students but were not PASE staff (94.8 percent). Statistical analyses of ratings indicated that staff saw a improvement in both social and academic behaviors for more than one-third of the students. However, another third showed no behavioral change, and approximately twenty percent lost ground.

Overall, initial school referrals to special education dropped 15.6 percent for schools that had PASE programs in 1985-86.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many aspects of the program are operating well; however, more than half of the students showed no behavioral improvements. This fact cannot be explained by any of the survey data. Administrators should reevaluate the frequency, duration and range of services they plan to offer in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This final evaluation was designed largely to update preliminary findings reported in the 1985-86 interim report. Although William Hilton was the primary author of the present report, we wish to acknowledge the work of at least two others on which it was built. Milton Chaikin designed the pilot version of the student impact survey (which had been modified and was given a full study in 1985-86), and Amy Hebard was instrumental in the design of this evaluation. Thanks are also due to Steve Meyers and Joanne Lund of the Division of Special Education for making their referral information available to us in a timely fashion.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Purpose

The primary objective of Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) is to reduce the numbers of students referred to special education by providing support to the regular education program. During 1985-86 the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) provided funds to all 32 community school districts to develop and implement PASE programs.

PASE is based on the rationale that alternative services in a general education setting are preferable for many students who are at risk of being referred to special education because:

- Alternative services avoid the stigmatization of a handicapped classification and special education placement.
- PASE programs maintain children in their current school whereas enrollment in special education often means transporting children to schools outside of their neighborhood.
- PASE operates in the integrated setting of general education in contrast to the physical segregation of special education classes.
- PASE children and their parents may more readily accept PASE services than placement in special education classes.

Districts submitted proposals to D.S.E. as part of their Comprehensive Compensatory Education Plans which detailed the use of funds for Chapter 1 and Pupils with Special Education Needs (P.S.E.N.). D.S.E. guidelines allowed districts to develop alternative programs that reflected local needs and utilized available resources. Students eligible for the PASE program were

referral to special education as a result of low achievement. Kindergarten and first-grade students were selected by district-specified criteria including readiness tests, checklists, and school work. Second through ninth-grade students were eligible if their reading or mathematics scores on standardized city-wide tests were at or below the 24th percentile.

Services

In most districts PASE services were multifaceted, designed to provide support to students with different needs. Three general approaches were characteristic of program activities: guidance intervention, an approach emphasizing instruction, and a combination of guidance and instruction.

Guidance Approach. The PASE guidance approach was designed primarily to identify and modify students' inappropriate behaviors, and often included one or more of the following: individual or small-group counseling; whole-class guidance with self-contained classes; social contracts between students and project or instructional staff; assessments of students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles; meetings with classroom teachers; conferences with school support staff; meetings with parents; and referrals to outside agencies or professionals. Twelve community school districts emphasized guidance as their primary PASE activity.

Instructional Approach. Seven community school districts focused their PASE efforts exclusively on instruction. Instructional efforts were designed to address learning problems

identified in targeted students, particularly among children reading below grade level. These programs emphasized basic skills instruction and used varied methodologies and materials.

Guidance and Instructional Support. In response to the multiple needs of their targeted students, thirteen community school districts designed programs that provided both guidance and instructional support. These districts integrated guidance activities such as career education and decision making into their academic programs. A combination of individual and group PASE services were provided by teachers and/or guidance counselors. PASE services included remedial tutorials as well as whole-class instruction, and a variety of counseling services provided to both students and parents (e.g., individual and group counseling, family outreach, and referrals to community agencies).*

EVALUATION ISSUES AND METHODS

This final report by the Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) on the 1985-86 Program Alternatives to Special Education (PASE) focuses on four questions:

- How many students participated in PASE during the 1985-86 school year?
- Why were students selected for participation in PASE?

*For a more complete review of services provided by PASE in 1985-86 refer to the O.E.A. Interim Report on 1985-86 Program Alternatives to Special Education (April, 1986).

- What impact did the program have on students?
- Did the annual rate of initial school referrals to School Based Support Teams or Committees On The Handicapped (S.B.S.T./C.O.H.) decrease in schools with PASE services?

Methodology

Preliminary analyses of data available to address some of these issues were included in the interim O.E.A. PASE report. The present report updates the participation and referral data reported previously. It also reports additional information on staff perceptions of changes in students' social and academic behavior as indicators of the extent to which the needs of these students have been addressed.

Updated information on student participation was obtained by use of an O.E.A. spring Roster Survey on which PASE staff provided the names of all of the students who had been referred to their program by December, 1985, the reasons for student selection, and the services the students received. O.E.A. also obtained from D.S.E. the number of initial school referrals to special education made by PASE schools.

In addition, O.E.A. utilized a questionnaire on which teachers assessed the impact PASE had on students. On this questionnaire, classroom teachers or program staff provided information about student selection, indicated whether the student had been or would be referred to special education after receiving PASE services, and rated behavioral and academic changes observed in PASE students over the year. (See Appendices A and B for specific categories.)

The survey sample was randomly selected and included 2,324 (25.0 percent) of the (9,295) students listed on the fall PASE Roster. Specific school staff, who were identified on the fall PASE roster as being familiar with individual sampled students, were asked to complete the pretest student impact questionnaire. The same procedure was followed for the spring posttest survey. The spring student sample remained the same as in the fall, but in some cases, the staff person providing information was not the same. Questionnaires were returned for 1,828 (78.7 percent) of students in the fall, and 2,059 (88.6 percent) in the spring. These returns resulted in 1,557 (67.0 percent) matched fall and spring questionnaires.

Initial school referrals for September through February of two years (1984-85 and 1985-86) had been supplied to O.E.A. either by C.O.H. chairpeople or (beginning March, 1985) through records centrally maintained by the Division of Special Education. The Office of Management Services of the Division of Special Education supplied updated information from March, 1986 through June, 1986 for the present report.

II. STUDENT SELECTION AND PARTICIPATION

STUDENT SELECTION

Number of Student Participants

Districts reported that a total of 16,031 students were selected to receive PASE services during the 1985-86 school year. (See Table 1.) Of this number, 12,904 participants were actually identified on the PASE student roster returned to O.E.A.; however, district liaisons reported that the remaining students were also receiving services. It is difficult to obtain a firm picture of student participation in this program. For one reason, the line separating program and non-program students was not always sharply defined and may have resulted in some overestimation of participation. In some programs students cycled in and out of PASE after a brief period of participation. Also, it should be noted that one district focused most of its effort on staff and/or parents rather than on children.

Grade-Level Focus

Division of Special Education guidelines recommended that the program focus on elementary school students. Accordingly, analyses of the PASE student database reveal that more than three-quarters of the students on the roster (9,857, or 77.4 percent) were elementary school students. (See Table 2.) The largest concentration of these children was in grades one through five (67.4 percent). Students in middle schools clustered in grades seven and eight (19.2 percent).

TABLE 1

Students Selected for 1985-86
Program Alternatives to Special Education

District	Number of Schools in Program	Participating Students[a]		
		Identified on Roster	Additional Reported	Total
1	18	442	0	442
2	10	239	1	240
3	6	88	0	88
4	3	86	3	89
5	3	128	0	128
6	5	248	0	248
7	8	373	0	373
8	7	92	0	92
9	4	73	0	73
10	26	772	0	772
11	11	354	0	354
12	4	135	0	135
13	6	738	2,762	3,500
14	4	326	74	400
15	7	226	0	226
16	13	232	0	232
17	22	1,246	0	1,246
18	8	258	0	258
19	4	160	0	160
20	22	574	0	574
21	6	295	5	300
22	9	950	0	950
23	2	57	48	105
24	8	278	0	278
25	22	354	0	354
26	24	790	0	790
27	18	1,479	0	1,479
28	14	393	0	393
29	23	226	234	460
30	15	269	0	269
31	7	717	0	717
32	12	306	0	306
Total	351	12,904	3,127	16,031

[a] The number of students on roster are those who were referred by May, 1986 and who appear on the O.E.A. roster. Additional participants were reported by district liaisons to be in the program (at the time of the O.E.A. site visit); however, their names were not on the roster.

- Districts targeted specific schools to be included in PASE.
- School staff selected students for participation in the program.

TABLE 2

Participation of Students by Grade and School Level

	School Level			
	Elementary	Middle	Total	
Grade	n	n	n	(%)
Kindergarten	333	-	333	2.6
1	2,049	-	2,049	16.1
2	1,991	-	1,991	15.6
3	1,675	-	1,675	13.2
4	1,629	-	1,629	12.8
5	1,238	-	1,238	9.7
6	942	176	1,118	8.8
7	-	1,391	1,391	10.9
8	-	1,054	1,054	8.3
9	-	251	251	2.0
Total	9,857	2,872	12,729	100.0

NOTE: These 12,729 students appeared on the O.E.A. roster. An additional 175 were on roster, but their grade codes were not indicated.

- Guidelines for 1985-86 PASE stressed services for elementary level students.

Reasons for Selection

District liaisons in most districts reported closer adherence in 1985-86 than in 1984-85 to P.S.E.N. guidelines for student selection (a test score of one or more years below grade level in reading or mathematics). Consistent with districts' reported adherence to P.S.E.N. eligibility criteria, a majority of students (63.8 percent) were referred because of reading deficiencies. (See Table 3.) A variety of other criteria were also used for student selection. Analyses of the PASE database revealed that more than half (56.3 percent) of the students were referred for two or more reasons. Many students also had general learning problems (41.5 percent), behavior problems (31.4 percent), and poor achievement in mathematics (28.3 percent) in addition to, or instead of, reading problems. Other reasons for selection were indicated but with less frequency.

Services Provided by PASE

Services were recorded on the roster for 12,055 (93.4 percent) of the students. A majority of PASE students participated in at least two types of activities; 6,606 (51.2 percent) were provided with multiple services. More than half of the students received language arts instruction (58.2 percent); 53.8 percent received guidance services. (See Table 4.) The combination of reading instruction and guidance was the most frequent pairing of services; nearly 34.6 percent of the students in the program received both. In addition to various types of academic instruction and guidance, PASE students also

TABLE 3

Student Selection Criteria

Reason for Selection[a]	Students Selected (N = 12,904) n	(%)[b]
Reading deficiencies	8,229	63.8
Learning problems	5,356	41.5
Behavior problems	4,048	31.4
Mathematics deficiencies	3,657	28.3
Home problems	1,269	9.8
Attendance problems	1,089	8.4
Limited English proficiency (LEP)	963	7.5
Other problems	650	5.0
Health problems	392	3.0

[a] Students were referred for the following number of reasons: 5,576 (43.2 percent), one reason; 3,537 (27.4 percent), two reasons; 2,168 (16.8 percent), three reasons; and 1,481 (11.5 percent), four or more reasons. The reason for referral of the other 142 students on the O.E.A. roster was unspecified.

[b] Percentages do not total 100 because students may be referred for more than one reason.

- A majority of the students in the program had reading problems, as expected since PASE 1985-86 guidelines emphasized selecting students who were P.S.E.N. eligible.

TABLE 4

Services Provided to PASE Students

Services Provided[a]	Students for whom Service was Indicated (N = 12,904)	
	n	(%)[b]
Language arts instruction	7,504	58.2
Guidance services	6,940	53.8
Mathematics instruction	3,412	26.4
Health screening	2,526	19.6
Cultural enrichment	2,100	16.3
Other academic instruction	1,849	14.3
Other services	1,351	10.5
Career education/work study	804	6.2
English as a second language (E.S.L.)	774	6.0

[a] Students were provided with the following number of services: 4,065 (31.5 percent), one service; 2,107 (16.3 percent), two services; 1,965 (15.2 percent), three services; 982 (7.6 percent), four services; and 1,552 (12.0 percent), five or more services. Services were unspecified for the other 2,233 students on the O.E.A. roster.

[b] Percentages do not total 100 because students may receive more than one service.

- Language arts instruction and guidance services predominate PASE, reflecting both targeted student problems and program service strategies.

received services which included health screening, cultural enrichment, career education or work-study experiences, and English as a second language instruction.

Crosstab analysis revealed a correspondence between the reasons individual students were selected and the services provided to them. Among students who were selected for PASE because of reading deficiencies, 76.7 percent received language arts instruction and 49.2 percent received guidance; of students who were selected with learning problems, 70.7 percent received guidance services, 64.4 percent were given reading instruction, and 35.4 percent received mathematics instruction; similarly, 81.6 percent of the students with behavior problems received guidance. These findings strongly suggest that students received the proper services according to the expressed reasons for their participation in the program.

III. PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PASE ON STUDENTS

STUDENT IMPACT SURVEY

Description of the Instrument

In order to assess the impact PASE had on its students, O.E.A. designed a questionnaire to be completed by school or program staff. Twenty-five percent of the students listed on the fall roster for PASE were chosen at random to comprise the survey sample. An attempt was made to identify a staff person who knew each selected student very well. This was done by retrieving the name of the person who first selected the student for participation in the program. Questionnaires were then directed to persons who had referred students to PASE or, in cases where these individuals could not be identified, to staff members designated by the school principal. Principals were asked to select staff members who knew the reasons a student had been selected for PASE and the outcome of that student's participation in the program. Questionnaires were distributed in mid-November, 1985 and again late in May, 1986. The questionnaire asked for basic descriptive information and responses to sets of rating scales. Respondents were asked to rate students along a scale ranging from poor to excellent on various social and academic behaviors that were held to be educationally relevant. Don't-know responses were excluded from the analysis.

Survey Findings

Description of the sample. Descriptions of PASE participants in the student impact survey are essentially the same as those obtained on the PASE roster, indicating that the sample was representative of the target population as a whole. Three-quarters of the students were in elementary school (74.4 percent), with the largest concentration in grades one through five (71.0 percent). Middle school students were mainly in grades seven and eight (15.3 percent). Of students surveyed, 39.8 percent were female and 60.2 percent were male, which is typical of many prevention programs. Approximately fifty-five percent of the surveyed students had never been referred to special education nor were they being considered for referral at the time of this study. Of the remaining students, 13.5 percent of the sample had been referred to S.B.S.T./C.O.H. prior to the 1985-86 school year, 10.7 percent were referred during the program year, and an additional 4.4 percent were considered but not referred to special education. No information was given for the remaining 16.4 percent.

Description of the respondents. Seventy percent of the respondents were classroom teachers, 20.0 percent were guidance counselors, 5.2 percent were PASE staff, 4.0 percent were assistant principals, 0.5 percent were school principals, and 0.7 percent were other school staff. Within this group of professionals, 63.6 percent indicated that they had consulted with other staff to obtain a more complete impression of the students

being surveyed. Strengthening the validity of this survey, the preponderance of respondents were not PASE staff members, since much of the data was subjective.

Student Impact Ratings. Change scores were computed to provide comparisons between fall and spring ratings of individual items on the student impact survey. (The percentages of students whose behaviors either improved, declined, or remained the same are presented in Table 5, and also in Appendices A and B.) Wilcoxon analyses of the magnitude and direction of change scores indicated that a larger number of students improved their social and academic behaviors than declined, and that this difference was statistically significant ($p < .01$) for almost all items on the rating scale. Furthermore, in terms of the mean rank, students who showed a positive change improved to a greater degree than negative-change students declined. However, the Wilcoxon analysis does not evaluate those students who did not change, and this group comprised over one-third of the sample. Preliminary analyses of the change scores showed that the proportion of students who improved, declined, or did-not-change was statistically, significantly different from the pattern that might be expected by chance alone. Students were less likely to decline than they were to improve or remain the the same. (Chi-square analyses for both social and academic behaviors was significant at $p < .001$.)

While it is clear that a larger number of students improved their social and academic behaviors than declined, the group who

TABLE 5

Summary of the Mean-Change in Ratings for the Student Impact Survey Administered Before and After PASE by Program Model

Program Models	Total n	Improved %	Declined %	Remained the Same %
Social Behaviors:				
Guidance & Instruction	350	43.6	19.8	36.6
Instructional Model	153	39.9	21.1	39.0
Guidance Model	499	33.5	24.3	42.2
Entire Program	1,002	37.0	24.2	38.8
Academic Behaviors:				
Guidance & Instruction	337	44.8	17.8	37.4
Instructional Model	158	41.9	16.9	41.2
Guidance Model	487	36.5	21.0	42.5
Entire Program	982	38.6	20.8	40.6

- The pattern of behavioral change was similar for all components of the program.

showed no change was also as large as the one that improved. The finding, that most students in the program either remained the same or declined, is very disappointing and cannot be explained by data collected for this evaluation.

If an explanation for overall lack of improvement is sought, the impact of different district service strategies on student behavior are of some interest, even though these are only cursory comparisons lacking analytical rigor. Unfortunately, each of the three service strategies (guidance, instructional, and combined guidance and instruction) resulted in similar impacts on student behavior, although the guidance and instruction model had slightly larger effect. (See Table 5.) Wilcoxon analyses of the three models showed similar distributions in the pattern of improvement, as was found for the entire program. Similarly, the difference in the pattern of students who improved, declined, or remained the same (within each program model) cannot be attributed to chance alone. (Chi-square analyses within each of the three components was significant $p < .01$.) However, Chi-square comparisons between program models were not significant for either social or academic ratings, again pointing to no significant differences between program models.

IV. REFERRALS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

CHANGES IN SCHOOL REFERRAL RATES

Type of Data

The first assessment of general education students referred to S.B.S.T./C.O.H. for special education placement is known as an initial referral. Referrals can be made by members of the school staff; these are termed school referrals. Referrals can also be initiated by other sources such as the student's parents, community agencies, or students themselves. Referral rate analyses reported here were performed only on initial school referrals since these are the referrals over which the school is believed to have some control.

The bulk of the referral data presented in this report was supplied by C.O.H. chairpersons to the D.S.E. Office of Management Services. (O.E.A. obtained referral data directly from C.O.H. offices for a few schools for which information was not available centrally.) Preliminary results for a six-month period from September through February were presented in O.E.A.'s interim report for PASE 1985-86 (April, 1986). The data presented in this final report represent the ten-month period from September through June of school years 1984-85 and 1985-86. All schools reported by PASE district liaisons to be in the 1985-86 program were included in these analyses.

Changes in School Referrals

Table 6 presents initial school referral data for each of

TABLE 6

Initial S.B.S.T./C.O.H. Referrals Made by Staff in PASE Schools, in 1984-85 and 1985-86

	Referrals by School Staff					
	1984-85			1985-86		
District	Register[a]	n	(%)[b]	Register[a]	n	(%)[b]
1	9,668	246	(2.5)	9,936	313	(3.2)
2	3,908	306	(7.8)	3,834	272	(7.1)
3	3,122	147	(4.7)	3,231	153	(4.7)
4	1,930	86	(4.5)	1,883	84	(4.5)
5	1,486	3	(0.2)	1,577	7	(0.4)
6	7,619	187	(2.5)	7,587	186	(2.5)
7	4,376	307	(7.0)	4,503	188	(4.2)
8	4,286	85	(2.0)	4,185	53	(1.3)
9	3,947	110	(2.8)	4,242	36	(0.8)
10	24,338	975	(4.0)	25,921	1,226	(4.7)
11	7,865	337	(4.3)	7,966	300	(3.8)
12	4,622	234	(5.1)	4,620	140	(3.0)
13	3,334	54	(1.6)	3,132	10	(0.3)
14	3,385	33	(1.0)	3,419	37	(1.1)
15	6,612	324	(4.9)	6,459	217	(3.4)
16	8,054	298	(3.7)	8,279	274	(4.9)
17	23,122	417	(1.8)	25,894	450	(1.7)
18	8,293	272	(3.3)	7,619	273	(3.6)
19	2,916	115	(3.9)	3,200	100	(3.1)
20	13,920	479	(3.4)	14,165	441	(3.1)
21	4,562	187	(4.1)	4,421	133	(3.0)
22	9,029	348	(3.9)	9,189	281	(3.1)
23	1,218	64	(5.3)	1,193	15	(1.3)
24	7,851	455	(5.8)	8,033	337	(4.2)
25	13,083	618	(4.7)	13,539	595	(4.4)
26	10,554	331	(3.1)	10,893	292	(2.7)
27	13,208	662	(5.0)	13,338	421	(3.2)
28	9,924	607	(6.1)	10,109	378	(3.7)
29	14,255	602	(4.2)	14,409	456	(3.2)
30	13,188	653	(5.0)	13,263	434	(3.3)
31	5,893	55	(0.9)	5,690	78	(1.4)
32	10,477	495	(4.7)	10,687	338	(3.2)
Total	260,045	10,092	($\bar{X}$%=3.9)	266,416	8,518	($\bar{X}$%=3.2)

[a] These are the audited registers from October of each school year and include only those schools with a 1985-86 PASE program.

[b] These percentages are based on the participating schools' registers.

- Referral rates decreased in 22 districts, remained the same in 3, and increased in 7.

the 32 community school districts. The rate of referral decreased in 22 of these districts, remained the same in three, and increased in the other seven. Staff in PASE schools made a total of 8,518 referrals (3.2 percent of their schools' populations) from September, 1985 to June, 1986, a net decrease of 1,574 referrals from the 10,092 (3.9 percent) made during the same period the prior school year. The decrease reflects an overall 15.6 percent reduction in referrals. Referrals decreased in 214 of the PASE schools (61.7 percent), remained the same in 13 schools (3.7 percent), and increased in 120 (34.6 percent).*

Since the same schools did not participate in both years it is not appropriate to compare this decrease with the 21.1 percent decline reported in the 1984-85 final evaluation report. As noted in that report, rates of special-education referrals in PASE schools may plateau after the program has operated successfully for more than one year. To check this tendency, an additional analysis was conducted to compare changes in referrals in PASE schools new to the program in 1985-86 with those of schools participating for a second year.

Of the 351 schools in the 1985-86 program, 79 were first-year schools. Similar proportions of students in first-year schools (3.1 percent) and second-year schools (3.2 percent) were referred in 1985-86. (See Table 7.) However, the extent of

*Changes in referrals are reported for 347 schools, not the 351 reported in Table 1. This was done to conform with C.O.H. referral reports which usually combine data from mini-schools and annexes with the school as a whole.

TABLE 7

Comparisons of Referrals in First and Second Year PASE Schools

Comparisons	Second-year schools (n = 272)	First-year schools (n = 79)
1984-85 School Register	209,388	50,657
1985-86 School Register	214,702	51,714
Number Referred 1984-85	7,882	2,210
Number Referred 1985-86	6,912	1,606
Percent Referred 1984-85	3.8	4.4
Percent Referred 1985-86	3.2	3.1
Change in Referrals 1984-85/ 1985-86	-970	-604
Percent Change in Number of Referrals from 1984-85 to 1985-86	-12.3	-27.3

- The rate of decrease in first year schools was higher than in second year schools, suggesting a plateau effect beyond the first year.

decline in referrals was much larger in first-year schools than in second-year schools: the 604 fewer referrals in first-year schools reflects an overall decline of 27.3 percent; the 970 fewer referrals in second-year schools reflects an overall decline of 12.3 percent. Obviously, referral rate decrease has slowed in schools participating for the second year.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Positive Factors

There was increased adherence to P.S.E.N. guidelines in the 1985-86 program; consequently, a majority of students were referred because of reading deficiencies. Other selection criteria were also used, and many students were enrolled in the program to address more than one problem. Program staff did an excellent job of pairing PASE students with the appropriate services as shown by the close correspondence between students' selection criteria and services received.

The impact PASE had on its students, as perceived by non-PASE staff, revealed a modest effect on the improvement of social and academic behaviors and performance. In addition, the program met its objective: schools that participated in PASE 1985-86 reduced referrals to special education.

Program Limitations

Although the amount of service a student received was not measured, some staff responding to the student impact survey said they felt the frequency of service should be increased. Staff ratings also revealed that a little more than half of the students showed no improvement in their social and academic behaviors. Variations in program startup times and student contact hours may be factors that can explain why so many students did not improve.

Recommendations

Overall it seems that many aspects of the program are operating well; however the sizable number of students who made no behavioral improvements cannot be reconciled by the data at hand. It would be useful for administrators to reevaluate the frequency, duration, and range of services they plan to offer in the future. This reevaluation needs to address the program limitations outlined above (half of the students showed no improvement) or PASE may risk becoming a program that maintains students at their current level of academic or social deficiency. Keep in mind that, at present, the reduction in referral rates cannot be directly associated with any PASE-specific activities. Furthermore, it is very probable that second-year PASE schools have reached a plateau with regards to further reductions in initial referrals to special education. However, there is nothing wrong in reaching a plateau in referral rates, numbers of children genuinely need special education services. PASE can continue to contribute positive impacts, for students at risk of being referred to special education, by helping them achieve a variety of specific educationally relevant objectives, while enrolled in general education.

APPENDIX A

Staff Ratings of Student Social Behaviors Pre-Post PASE

Social Behaviors	Total N	Improved %	Declined %	Remained the Same %
Peer Relationships	1,044	40.3	22.7	37.0
Adult Relationships	1,012	37.0	23.2	39.8
Attitude Toward School	1,051	39.9	22.1	38.1
Attitude Toward Authority	1,038	37.0	23.6	39.4
Self Image	978	42.7	18.7	38.5
Frustration Tolerance	978	40.6	19.2	40.2
Cooperation	1,034	36.8	23.0	40.2
Patience	1,015	40.3	21.4	38.3
Self-Control	1,050	39.3	22.4	38.3
Confidence	1,292	33.3	37.2	29.6
Respect for Property	1,011(.05)	30.0	27.2	42.8
General Health	959 (NS)	27.0	27.0	46.0

NOTE: The significance level of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test, for the difference between students who improved vs those who declined, for any particular scale item is at least $p < .01$ unless otherwise indicated.
(NS = not significant.)

- Greatest improvement was shown in peer relationships, attitude toward school, self image, patience and self-control.

APPENDIX B

Staff Ratings of Student Academic Behaviors Pre-Post PASE

Academic Behaviors	Total N	Improved %	Declined %	Remained the Same %
Study Habits	1,035	43.8	12.2	44.1
Works Independently	1,041	44.9	14.7	40.4
Adjusts to New Situations	997	42.8	18.1	39.1
Works Well in Small Groups	980	44.2	18.9	36.9
Works Well in Large Groups	1,005	43.7	16.4	39.9
Retains New Information	1,013	42.3	16.1	41.6
Auditory Attention Span	997	42.2	15.7	42.0
Visual Attention Span	990	42.0	19.1	38.9
Completes Homework	995	38.9	23.7	37.4
Responds to Positive Reinforcement	1,006	34.7	24.6	40.8
Creativity	928	36.5	21.9	41.6
Leadership	944	38.1	19.1	42.8
Participates in Class	1,033	46.5	18.1	35.4
Begins Work on Time	1,013	39.0	19.1	42.0
Prepared for School	997	35.5	23.5	41.0
Arrives on Time to School	982	32.5 (NS)	28.5	39.0
Responds to Discipline	1,019	33.0	24.4	42.6
Speech Skills	954	30.0	24.6	45.4
Handwriting Skills	966	35.3	20.6	44.1
Memory Skills	974	41.5	17.2	41.3
Reading Skills	1,038	47.7	13.8	38.5
Mathematics Skills	939	45.0	16.9	38.0

NOTE: The significance level of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test, for the difference between students who improved vs those who declined, for any particular scale item is at least $p < .01$ unless otherwise indicated.
(NS = not significant.)

- Greatest improvement was shown in reading and mathematics skills.